

# Letter from Taizé

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in small villages surrounding the Austrian capital: "We stayed in a village an hour's drive from Vienna, near to Slovakia", says Beatrice. "The people were expecting us and had organised a transport service from the station. There were eighty of us in this village of three hundred and fifty inhabitants; it reminded me of my own village in Saxony. After us it was the Polish who arrived. I could help by translating for them in Russian. For everybody, all of this was very new. With everybody's help, we prepared very beautiful morning prayers in the little village church. The meeting aroused a great deal of hope for the

**YOUNG ADULT EUROPEAN MEETING IN VIENNA**

## Together to experience an adventure of trust

*For the twentieth time, at the end of last year, tens of thousands of young adults gathered for five days, for the European Meeting.*

*They came from north and south, from the east and the west of Europe, and from the other continents too.*

*This year they were in Vienna, from 29 December to 2 January. They came in a thousand buses and by special trains.*

**W**here are they from? What do they want?" As they watched the queues of buses getting longer, the customs officers were no doubt the first to ask, during the night of 28 and 29 December. How could they imagine that the young people filling the buses, arriving from different directions and from every country in Europe, had all come with the same goal? They had come to Austria to meet one another.

For anyone who approached the welcome centres on the morning of 29 December things already became much clearer. And after receiving the first explanations in their own languages, as they went on to the parishes where they

were to stay, it was obvious that something quite new was taking shape. What exactly was it? The young people of Vienna and the region, the families who welcomed the participants, and the young adults who had come from far away had come together like pilgrims of reconciliation; they were together to live out an adventure of trust.

### **A HUGE TASK OF PREPARATION**

More than three hundred parishes had prepared to receive the young adults. And around half the participants were housed in families or in parish halls.

Some of the young people had to stay

people. We could feel it during the times of sharing when they spoke to us about their life. For the few young people in the village, it was a wonderful experience to be with young Christians from so far away for this time of exchange and searching together."

In each of the host parishes, a small group had worked very hard to prepare everything ahead of time. Often, this commitment, which lasted for several months, made possible an in-depth transformation in the life of the parish itself.

In the deanery of Sitzendorf, the youth leader had proposed from the outset the challenge of welcoming three hundred and fifty people in the families. "The first preparation meeting went off



very well. Right away, many people who had not taken part in the previous Vienna meeting five years ago (either because they were too young or because they were not sufficiently motivated at that time) wanted to experience something "real". It was not easy to find places in families, so they started knocking at every door. They also spoke to the parents of children preparing to be confirmed, saying: "If you welcome some young people, your children will be able to understand something of faith as it is lived today." It touched me to see adults helping in the preparation so that their children could have a better grasp of the Christian faith. Realising that people had confidence in them, some of the young people felt such a sense of responsibility for the preparation that they surpassed themselves and are now ready to continue and to take on a project together!"

### **A CLIMATE OF GENEROSITY AND SPONTANEITY**

In the opinion of Martin, from Leonberg, a city near Stuttgart where the previous European meeting took place, what was really remarkable was how well everyone worked together. "It was visible that the parish was expecting us joyfully. All the generations gave a helping hand. The youngest were waiting for us at the tram stop, the oldest were busy preparing food, and the young adults organised the accommodation. Our host family even loaned us a car to go back and forth from the village to the station. The climate of openness in the families made a big impression on me. That is what I want to hold on to, that and the joy of singing together."

Thanks to the large number of families who had understood that the hospitality could be very simple and who dared to take in as many as ten people, the whole climate of the meeting was marked by generosity and spontaneity. In some parishes it was in the final days, even after Christmas, that some of the families offered to welcome

young people. Sometimes it was people who no longer had any regular contact with the parish, but who had heard on the radio or on television that more accommodation was needed.

On public transport, the Viennese readily helped people find their way, or engaged in conversation with them. They were genuinely interested in the young people and were keen to find out where they came from. The Vienna meeting of five years ago had left happy and peaceful memories.

During the period of preparation, a major effort was made in high schools and colleges to inform the youth of Vienna about the meeting. For nearly two months, a team of around ten brothers and volunteers from Taizé spoke to students of 15 years and over, during their religion classes.

About two hundred schools, made available by the city, provided make-shift accommodation for those who were not in families. Thanks to the team of young people who had come two

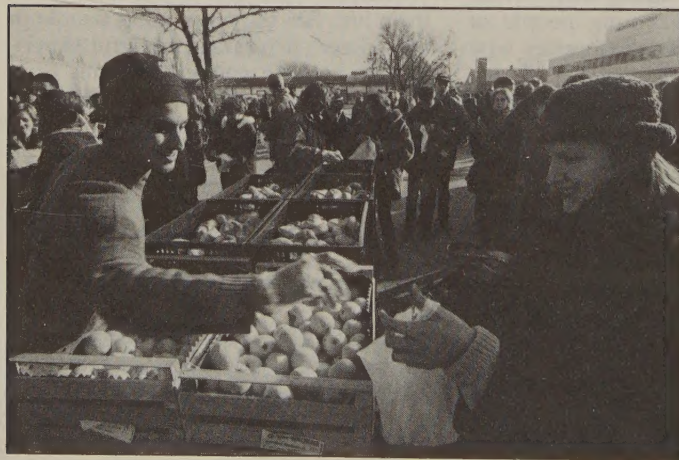
days early in order to welcome the others, these schools became the setting for a common life that was simple yet full of joy. People staying there took part in the prayers and the meetings in the neighbouring parishes. In these parishes, families were often found to invite the young people for the midday meal on New Year's Day, which was the last chance for getting to know people and for creating links. The city fire brigade supplied breakfast in ten schools where nothing else could be arranged. Help from the public services mainly took the form of the organisation of public transport. The police made sure that everything took place without delays and in complete safety.

### **PRACTICAL SOLIDARITY**

What marked this European meeting were its simplicity and its calm, and also people's desire to go beyond compartmentalisation and barriers, be they visible or invisible.

This spirit of openness was felt particularly during the mornings, after the prayer in the parishes. While some groups reflected on the Letter for 1998 "Joy Untold", others had the opportunity of meeting people who spoke about their commitments in the parish or neighbourhood, in the service of the poor, the sick, children, etc.

Practical solidarity is one of the characteristic features of the life of the Church in Vienna. In the parishes, people constantly spoke of their appreciation of the work done by Caritas. One group of young people were able to see how help is given daily to the homeless by a group of volunteers and students who spend their evenings going round the railway stations in a minibus.







Another group was welcomed in a children's village. "The meeting with the children and the young people was wonderful. In this village, women spend their entire lives looking after children who are not their own. The children have no parents or else they come from very difficult backgrounds. This being so, we were touched to see how they opened their door to a group of thirty strangers like us."

One group took part in a prayer in a prison for young people. "The meeting was fixed for 7.30 a.m. on 1 January. There were to be five of us from the parish and five from elsewhere. But the girl who was supposed bring a guitar did not arrive in time and we did not know what to do. At this point, a young man with long hair was passing by on the other side of the road with two guitars on his shoulders. We hesitated, then two of us went over to ask him if he could loan us a guitar. He asked, "What are you going to do with it?" We explained that we were going to visit some of the prisoners. He said: "I have been awake since yesterday morning and I am a bit tired because I have played all night, but I shall come along with you." In fact, he played very well. We had a short prayer and then we spoke to the prisoners for a time. When we left, we thought it would be good not to stop there, but to come back again every month. And the young man none of us knew said: "I'd like to come back with you too!"

### PRAYER TOGETHER

The high points of each day took place in the Exhibition Park on the Prater. The trams arrived continuously in front of the wide gates. The meals were served ahead of each prayer time,

and there were hot drinks distributed by soldiers. And since the weather was extremely mild for the season, many people chose to eat outside, although heated halls were available. After eating, everybody went to one of the halls that had been arranged for prayer.

Every year, an effort is made to decorate the enormous exhibition halls, the largest of which hold up to thirty thousand people, so that their cold and functional appearance is forgotten. This year, icons had been set out in a way that recalled the iconostases in orthodox churches. So, the Western Christians discovered something of the beauty that radiates in oriental churches. And people from countries whose tradition is orthodox (for example, one thousand from Russia and five hundred from Bulgaria) recognised certain elements that were familiar to them.

Still more than the decoration with its warm orange colours, with the icons, the candles and the greenery, the prayer was borne along by the songs. Like no

other means of expression, the human voice succeeds in translating the cry that rises from the depths of the heart.

Each evening, Brother Roger gave a short meditation, simultaneously translated into nineteen languages. The Letter "Joy Untold" indicates that we are going to offer assistance on each continent, in places where people are suffering. At the end of each evening's meditation, Brother Roger gave a concrete example.

Last year in Bulgaria, there were small regions that experienced hunger. So we are trying to find out who is most urgently in need of help this year.

In the region of San Antonio, in Brazil, drought is gaining the upper hand and water is lacking more and more. Desertification is on the increase and the people are forced to leave their tiny farms with no assurance of their future. We shall try to find out how to support them.

On the 1st of January, during the final prayer together, Brother Roger spoke of the situation in North Korea. The country underwent two years of flooding, then a year of drought. Many people are suffering from a lack of nutrition, in particular the children. Brother Roger announced that the Taizé Community, through "Operation Hope", will buy one million kilos of maize which will be transported into North Korea. According to a written text, a Taizé brother will go to North Korea and will be present throughout the distribution of the maize to those most in need. (In fact, this distribution of maize, with a brother's visit to North Korea, took place mid-February.)

### "A MISSION THROUGHOUT THE CITY"

Several Church leaders, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, took part in the evening prayers at the Exhibition Park: Archbishop Christophe Schönborn of Vienna, who said on several occasions

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## Why did Jesus call himself "The Son of Man"?

When Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do you say I am?", Peter replied: "You are the Christ, you are the Messiah." (Mk 8,29) These two expressions, which can both be translated literally "the anointed one", refer to the king and prophet sent and consecrated by God to give back hope to his people Israel, to set them free, and to inaugurate a reign of justice and peace. In the steps of Peter, Christians of all times call Jesus of Nazareth "the Christ".

But Jesus did not present himself with this word. He even ran away when the crowd wanted to proclaim him Messiah and make him king (Jn 6,14-15). When Peter says to him the same thing, but in private, Jesus's reaction reveals more. He accepts what Peter says to him: "You are the Christ", but he asks him firmly not to call him this in public (Mk 8,30). He himself, almost every time he says something about himself in private or in public, uses the name "the Son of Man" (for example Mk 8,31). What does he want to suggest by this?

"The Son of Man" is an enigmatic expression, with a double meaning. In the Bible, a "son of man" is first of all simply "a human being", in the same way that, for example, "the Children of Israel" are "the Israelites". With some of his sayings about "the Son of Man", Jesus expresses his consent to his human condition right to the limit. With this play on words, he refuses all the privilege which might, as Christ, have set him apart from other humans: "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men". In other words, "with me, the one who is like them, people are

## Why did Christ have to suffer?

It is not difficult to imagine that Jesus was aware that he would be rejected and even condemned to death and that he announced this. But what might cause a problem is that he speaks of it as a necessity: "The Son of Man must suffer many things" (Lk 9,22). His crucifixion is a fact. But why should it be "necessary" that he should be crucified? This question touches on a mystery which any answer can only hope to move towards.

It would be a serious misunderstanding to want to show by these words "it is necessary" the reason for Jesus's violent death. He himself denied any logical necessity when he said about his passion: "They hated me without reason" (Jn 15,25). The violence which struck him has no explanation or justification. Like every murder of an innocent person, it leaves a "why?" without an answer. His passion is first of all, like so much human suffering, something incomprehensible.

But Jesus does not undergo his suffering passively. "It is necessary" — it is like the cry of his prayer when he chooses to enter with all his being into God's mysterious plan. The people who want to kill him seem to be in control of everything. But Jesus does not believe that they are all-powerful. With his "it is necessary", he wants to discern the will of God even in what seems most contrary to God, his innocent suffering.

The prophets before him, who like him were God's servants, had had a similar experience. They too were insulted and rejected. But their suffering, for some of them reaching the point of martyrdom, had a meaning. They revealed the unimaginable patience of God who always

## Two Questions

going to do just what they want" (Lk 9,44). He could not have identified himself more deeply with humanity in its fragility.

But some of his other sayings about "the Son of Man", especially those which speak of his glory, contain an allusion to the "one like a son of man" whom Daniel saw in a vision (Dn 7,13-14). Daniel saw the enthronement of this "Son of Man". So how could this be other than the promised and expected Messiah? But this king does not have a royal palace at Jerusalem, because his throne is in the invisible world of God. His reign is not limited to Israel, but extends to all nations. And above all, "the Son of Man" is the king of the nations for ever, because he has entered the glory of God and dies no more.

By calling himself "Son of Man", Jesus implies that he, the humble "child of human beings", subjected to rejection and death, is the Christ and the Lord of all.

begins again. They also proved the personal selflessness of the prophets, guaranteeing their credibility. Jesus could not have an easier life than they did. In this sense it was "necessary" that, by agreeing to go to the point of dying for the Gospel, he should bear witness to its truth.

Hidden in the depths of the "necessity" of his cross lies what is at the heart of the Gospel: the command to love our enemies (Lk 6,27). In his passion, Jesus fulfills his own commandment. He prays and does good to those who mistreat him. And for that, he must suffer much. Otherwise, how could he have been our example and our way? Without undergoing destroying pain in his own body, he would not have been to the extreme point of forgiveness; he would not have opened for us the way that surpasses hope. He could not have "entered in to his glory" without experiencing rejection (Lk 24,26) because the glory of the Risen One is to offer his love and his forgiveness to everyone, even to those who refuse it.



# MEDITATING ON THE WORD

## MAY

*These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.*

# JOHANNINE HOURS

JOHN 8.3-11

*Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.*

**1 Fri** Ps 105:1-5 Seek God and his strength, seek God's face at all times. Remember the wonders God has done.

**2 Sat** Lk 1:67-79 At John the Baptist's birth, Zechariah said: Blessed be God, for he allows us to serve him without fear.

**3 SUN** Jn 10:22-30 Jesus said: My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

**4 Mon** Is 45:1-7 God says: I will go before you and will level the mountains so that you may know that I am the Lord, the one who calls you by name.

**5 Tue** Mt 11:25-27 Jesus said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having revealed to little children what you have hidden from the learned and clever.

**6 Wed** 2 Co 9:6-11 Paul writes: Anyone who sows generously will also reap generously. God loves the one who gives joyfully.

**7 Thu** Is 45:18-19 The Lord says: I did not tell my people to search for me in chaos. I am the Lord God, who proclaims justice, who speaks what is true.

**8 Fri** Ps 55:17-19 To God I call and he saves me, evening, morning and at noon. God's peace delivers my soul, for he hears my cry.

**9 Sat** Lk 10:38-42 Jesus said to Martha: You are worried and upset about many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.

**10 SUN** Jn 13:31-35 Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

**11 Mon** Is 43:18-21 The Lord says: Look, I am doing something new, even now it is emerging, do you not see it? Yes, I am making a way in the desert and my people will sing my praises.

**12 Tue** Ezk 34:1-16 The Lord says: I will take care of my flock. I shall look for the lost sheep, bring back the strays, bandage the injured and strengthen the sick. I shall watch over the one that is healthy and strong.

**13 Wed** 1 Jn 3:14-20 Let us not love just with words and in speech, but with actions and in truth.

**14 Thu** Ps 138 I thank you, God, for your love and your faithfulness; you have given new strength to my heart.

**15 Fri** Mt 22:34-40 Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is similar: Love your neighbour as yourself.

**16 Sat** Lk 10:1-9 Jesus sent out his disciples saying: Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there and say, "The kingdom of God is very near you."

**17 SUN** Jn 14:19-23 Jesus said: Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and the Father will love them, and we shall come to them and make our home in them.

**18 Mon** 2 Co 3:16-18 All of us, with our unveiled faces reflecting God's glory like mirrors, are being transformed into the image that we reflect.

**19 Tue** Lk 12:22-31 Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life. Can any of you, by worrying about it, add a single moment to the length of your life? If such a small thing is beyond your power, why worry about the rest?

**20 Wed** Is 43:1-4a Thus says God who created you: Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name, you are mine.

**21 Thu** Lk 24:46-53 ASCENSION After Jesus' Ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem full of joy, and they were continually in the Temple praising God.

**22 Fri** Ac 20:17-38 Paul said: Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving."

**23 Sat** Ezk 3:10-11 God said to Ezekiel: Son of man, listen carefully to all my words and take them to heart, then go to your compatriots and speak to them.

**24 SUN** Jn 17:11-21 Jesus prayed for his disciples, saying: Father, may they all be one, just as you are in me and I am in you, so that they may also be in us and the world may believe that you sent me.

**25 Mon** Rm 10:5-10 The Word of God is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart.

**26 Tue** 1 Jn 2:7-10 The darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. Whoever loves their neighbour remains in the light.

**27 Wed** Ps 84 Happy are they, who find their strength in you, Lord. As they pass through the valley of tears they make it a place of living springs.

**28 Thu** 1 S 3:1-18 Eli told the child Samuel: If you are called again, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

**29 Fri** 1 Jn 4:7-11 Let us love one another, for love is of God and whoever loves is born of God and knows God.

**30 Sat** Mt 5:1-12 Jesus said: Happy are the clear in heart: they shall see God. Happy are the peacemakers: they shall be called children of God.

**31 SUN** Jn 14:15-26 PENTECOST Before his Passion, Jesus said to his disciples: I shall ask the Father and he will give you another protector, the Holy Spirit, to be with you for ever.

Jesus' first words in Mark's Gospel are: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1.14) A key word in this passage is "repent", in Greek "metanoia". Metanoia signifies "change of mentality". This change of mentality is necessary to open our heart and welcome the kingdom of God, God's presence in our life.

The story of the woman who had been caught in adultery is a good example of this change of mentality and of heart, by which our horizon can be transformed to look at our lives in the light of the gospel, in the same way that God looks at our lives.

In this story we see that Jesus doesn't react the way the crowd does at the mystery of human weakness. The crowds and the Pharisees see one single incident in the life of this woman. Jesus who knows the hearts of all those before him, sees much more. He sees the entire person, the truth. He knows there's more in this woman than that which has just taken place. Jesus believes that humans can be transformed. By not adding his voice to the voices that condemn the woman, Christ opens a path: "I have come not to judge the world but to save the world." Welcomed just as she is, with her gifts and her limitations, this woman could go away, take responsibility of her life and love others just as she had been shown love. This woman who had been circled around by death, has come back to life.

- Today, it's rare that someone is treated like the woman in the story. But there exists another crowd of voices, inner darkness that accuses us: "You are guilty". What significance does turning towards the light of the gospel (the metanoia) mean?

- After having read this story, what surprises you? How do you understand Christ's look towards the others?



# MEDITATING ON THE WORD

## JUNE

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

# JOHANNINE HOUR

## PSALM 130 (12)

**1 Mon** Dt 32:8-11  
God finds his people in the desert, in a barren wasteland. God shields them and cares for them, guarding them as the apple of his eye.

**2 Tue** Mt 6:31-34  
Jesus said: strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness. Do not worry about tomorrow.

**3 Wed** Jn 1:35-42  
Jesus asked his first disciples, "What do you want?" They answered, "Master, where do you live?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see."

**4 Thu** 1 K 19:8b-13a  
Elijah waited for God on Mount Sinai. A great wind arose, but God was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. Then came a fire, but God was not in the fire. After the fire came a voice of silence, and God spoke to Elijah.

**5 Fri** 2 Co 8:7-15  
Our Lord Jesus Christ became poor for your sake, so that through his poverty you might become rich.

**6 Sat** Rm 12:1-13  
Do not model yourselves on the pattern of this world, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern the will of God.

**7 SUN** Jn 16:12-15  
Jesus said: When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking of his own accord but will say only what he has been told.

**8 Mon** Ps 36  
In you, Lord, is the source of life; in your light we see light.

**9 Tue** Mt 13:31-32  
Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which someone took and sowed in their field. Of all seeds it is the smallest, yet once it has grown it is the biggest of plants.

**10 Wed** Ps 46  
God is our refuge and strength, and an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be in turmoil.

**11 Thu** Mk 14:12-26  
As Jesus was eating with his disciples, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body."

**12 Fri** Ps 62  
Trust in God at all times. Pour out your heart to God.

**13 Sat** Jn 6:37-40  
Jesus said: The will of the one who sent me is that I should lose none of those he has given me, but that I should raise them up on the last day.

**14 SUN** Lk 9:11-17  
Taking the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the people. They all ate as much as they wanted.

**15 Mon** Ps 119:1-16  
With all my heart I seek you, O God. I treasure your promises in my heart so as not to sin against you.

**16 Tue** Mt 12:46-50  
Jesus said: Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

**17 Wed** Mt 25:14-30  
In a parable, the master said to his faithful servant, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a little, I will entrust you with much more. Come and share your master's happiness!"

**18 Thu** 1 Co 15:12-28  
Paul writes: If Christ has not been raised then our message is empty and so is your faith. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. For just as all die in Adam, so in Christ all will be brought to life.

**19 Fri** Ga 5:13-14  
You were called to be free. Do not use your freedom for self-indulgence but to serve one another in love.

**20 Sat** Mt 28:16-20  
Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: I am with you always, to the end of time.

**21 SUN** Lk 9:18-24  
Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

**22 Mon** Mk 2:13-14  
As he was walking along, Jesus saw Levi sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

**23 Tue** Mk 4:1-9, 13-20  
Jesus said in a parable: Some, like seeds sown in good soil, listen to the Word of God, accept it, and bear much fruit.

**24 Wed** Ac 13:25  
St JOHN THE BAPTIST As John was completing his work, he said: Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but one is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

**25 Thu** Jn 8:12  
Jesus said: I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark but will have the light of life.

**26 Fri** Rm 10:11-13  
Paul writes: There is no difference between persons: all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him.

**27 Sat** Mt 23:1-12  
Jesus said: The greatest among you will be your servant.

**28 SUN** Lk 9:57-62  
Someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

**29 Mon** 2 Tm 4:6-8, 16-18  
SS PETER AND PAUL Paul writes: The Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the good news might be proclaimed for all people to hear.

**30 Tue** Jn 12:35-36  
Jesus said to his disciples: Believe in the light so that you may become children of light.

*Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps find time of prayer.*

This psalm is a cry of hope. How can this be possible? The psalmist seems to be in despair. But in saying: "I call to you, Lord" (v.1), "Lord, hear my cry." (v.2) dares to raise up his song to God. Even in time of difficulty he places his trust in God. The path that is closed becomes a path of hope.

But what is hope? By reading this psalm, we understand that hope is something better than human optimism. To hope is to live with an inner conviction that all we desire will come, "more than a watchman for daybreak" (v.6) even if we don't see it in the immediate. Just as St. Paul writes: "hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping for something which is already visible. But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait filled with persevering confidence" (Rom 8.24-25). The mystery is that often this is learnt when we are lying low in an abyss, the only way of going forward is to have trust.

Hope needs roots, foundation. Hope that the psalmist has is built upon love from God. He knows that this love is forgiveness: "With you is forgiveness" (v.4). His hope is built upon the experience of God's unconditional love.

Hope doesn't encircle us, but to the contrary, it opens. Hope is communicative. After having recalled reasons for his hope, the psalmist says to the people: "Let Israel hope in the Lord." (v.7a) He sees God's generosity overflowing: "with him is generous ransom" (v.7b).

- How does the image of a "watchman waiting for daybreak" help me understand hope, waiting?
- What am I hoping for in my life for my people, in the Church?



that the European meeting and its preparation were like "a mission throughout the city", Orthodox Metropolitan Michael, of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Lutheran Bishop Sturm, Bishop Tomaszak from Poland, Lutheran Superintendent Horn, Cardinal Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna, the Apostolic Nuncio Squicciarini, Methodist Superintendent Nauser.

One evening, Dr. Thomas Klestil, President of the Republic of Austria, came to the prayer. Brother Roger also invited the President of the Supreme Court of Hungary, Pal Solt, who has been attending the European meetings for years.

On the first day of the meeting, the Austrian President had sent a message of welcome. "It is with much joy that I welcome all of you to Austrian soil! I am among those who carry within them the significant memory of the first European meeting in Vienna, five years ago. It is a memory of a joyful atmosphere of prayer and sharing, which opens up our hearts in a wonderful way and which creates a space of fraternity and intimacy which overcome frontiers, as we have hardly ever experienced."

In the afternoons, meetings were held in the same exhibition halls. The first day was given over to a Bible theme. On the second day there were regional meetings, which made it possible to talk about the hope of which each person can be the bearer at home. The last afternoon there was a choice between going deeper in topics about inner life and an intercontinental forum where people from different continents talked of the quality of their life at home. It was here that two choirs from the Serbian Orthodox Church communicated through something of the treasure of their faith.

One of the halls, much used, was kept in silence. Many people spent a moment there, aware that, in order to keep their eyes fixed on the essential, sometimes it is important to be able to go apart and search for inner silence.

The presence of young Orthodox Christians from Russia, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Belorussia, Ukraine, Macedonia, Serbia and Bulgaria was important, their numbers having increased from previous years. On the 1st of January, they took part in the liturgies in the Orthodox parishes of Vienna, of the Constantinople, Moscow and Romanian Patriarchates.

## **AFTER THE EUROPEAN MEETING**

Perhaps even more than in other years, because of the long work of preparation with the parishes, many young people in the region of Vienna wondered about the question of continuity of the life of the parishes after the meeting was over. Here is a reaction from



## **The Young Adult European Meeting in Vienna was the twentieth:**

- 1978: Paris
- 1979: Barcelona
- 1980: Rome
- 1981: London
- 1982: Rome
- 1983: Paris
- 1984: Cologne
- 1985: Barcelona
- 1986: London
- 1987: Rome
- 1988: Paris
- 1989: Wroclaw
- 1990: Prague
- 1991: Budapest
- 1992: Vienna
- 1993: Munich
- 1994: Paris
- 1995: Wroclaw
- 1996: Stuttgart
- 1997: Vienna

Josef, co-ordinator for work among the young in a large city neighbourhood:

"The essential in what we live with at Taizé is not prayer taken on its own, but prayer as part of a whole. Prayer is at the heart, but there are many things around it. It is not only a question of praying, but of finding a way of living that is welcoming and simple, on a daily basis. My first question now is how to go about living both at home and in the parishes a greater communion. I work for the Church professionally, with young people. The European meeting has changed my conception of this work. I am constantly faced with the question of the limits of my work and the complementarity between my private life and my pastoral work. I understand that it is not a question of setting up rules and principles, but of bringing to the forefront the witness you give through the way you live. It would be dangerous to try to organise things more and more, forgetting what is at the heart. We would lose the meaning of what we are doing, and wear ourselves out in keeping up a facade."

In many parishes, people want to keep up a regular prayer, as in Dürnkrot. "In our small village, writes Karin, we only welcomed ninety-one young people in the families. The first morning, I played the organ for the prayer, but I can't sing well. Nobody dared to start and I played the song ten times. Then, the eleventh time round, somebody started to sing, then a few more, and finally everybody joined in. During the get-together with the host

families after the meeting, everybody sang and we stayed on in that cold church for much longer than we had intended. Everybody agreed that we should keep on coming together for prayer and for sharing based on Brother Roger's letter. "It is essential that this kind of prayer becomes a part of our lives as a parish."

Another city centre youth animator expressed his experience in this way, "I learned through the meeting that a renewal of the Church is possible and that it is not necessary to wait for a change in the structures to begin this renewal."

The day after the meeting ended, one of the Vienna newspapers commented, "The eighty thousand young adults from thirty-four nations who have just left our city have left their mark on it. Beyond the limits of denominations, they have given thought to, among other things, the meaning of life, but above all they have made the experience of the mystical strength of Christianity. Vienna is empty now, but in a certain way, through their simplicity and joy, the young people have left us a message. These yearly meetings of thousands and thousands of young Christians demonstrate that old Europe is still inhabited by an inner strength that many people believed to be exhausted. And the parishes that are alive, even in the big city of Vienna, show to what point Christians are well grounded in present day society and are searching to live their faith in everyday life."





## Echoes from the Continents

### Poland

#### Welcome of People from Russia

The movement of more than a thousand buses going to the European Meeting was the occasion of many gestures of hospitality. This is the account of Dorota and Urszula from the South of Poland:

"Gosc w dom, Bóg w dom" — "A guest in the house, God in the house", says an old Polish proverb. We had already been glad last summer because of the suggestion that we could welcome for a night in our town of Bochnia (near Cracow) a group from Moscow and Orenburg on their way to Taizé. Up until now we had been enjoying other people's hospitality in different cities of Europe; this time we were able to open our own houses for others. In a few days the necessary places were found in families, and we cancelled the places that had been reserved at a youth hostel.

Everyone was expected in a family. Because of a signposting error on the roads, the group arrived five hours late. But none of us were discouraged. We waited perseveringly until one o'clock in the morning, upset only because our guests would not be staying with us long enough to rest properly and to eat what we had got ready for them.

After this good experience in August, we decided this winter to offer hospitality to three groups from Moscow during their journey to the European Meeting at Vienna. This time we worked together with two other parishes: Nowy Sacz and Brzesko.

In our parish, as in the summer, we had no problems in organizing the welcome of the pilgrims. The parish priest, a hotel-keeper, and many families who had al-

ready welcomed people in the summer offered hospitality again.\* It was a great joy for us. Not being able to organize a big step of the Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth in our little town, we are glad to have been able to join it by giving a warm welcome.

### Italy

#### In the earthquake zone

On 31 December, the prayer which was celebrated at 1.30 p.m. at Vienna during the European Meeting was broadcast directly to Nocera Umbra near Foligno, one of the towns in Italy affected by the earthquake in 1997. Those who are helping with the organization of aid had suggested a day of meetings and prayer directly linked with the young people from the whole of Europe meeting at Vienna.

Analecto describes the situation in his town: "In this martyred land, our precarious situation has become even harder with the freezing cold. About eight thousand people do not have a house any more. Most of them, especially old people, are still living in tents, in spite of the cold. They want to stay on their land, and they are afraid of not being able to return. They are simple people who do not ask much, but who want to stay where their families have lived.

Yesterday evening our Bishop called the young people together with an urgent appeal: let us rebuild the social, cultural and spiritual fabric of this land! Sadly, our land of Umbria will be very much changed. Many small villages perched on the mountains where there used to be so much peace will not be rebuilt. It will take time to bring hope back to these people who have lost everything. At Selvano, where everything was destroyed for the second time, the people had not yet finished repaying the bank. The young people who had started to repopulate the mountains are leaving. How can we help people to adapt to this situation, to live in these temporary barracks and caravans?

In the diocese of Foligno, 90% of the churches are no longer usable; now

people are meeting in the tents of the cue organizations, as we wait for tents offered by the dioceses of Lombardia and Lazio which are twinned with us.

The positive side of these events is solidarity. It is true that in the face of need, people radiate charity towards those who are even more needy. Everywhere there is welcome, sacrifice, practical gestures which obliterate social and religious labels.

In order to prepare for the Vienna Meeting, we held our monthly prayer in the village of tents at Verchiano, because we want to be close to our people in prayer too. Despite the cold and the continuing earth tremors even old people came and they thanked God for life, for the presence of the volunteers who are accompanying them. They were discouraged, but simply transmitted the desire to live."

## Letter from Taizé

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